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KT photo | **Tim Bath**

# **House of Burgess: Germany, not U.S., recognizes genocide**

## **Turkey furious over Armenian genocide recognition**

**By Rob Burgess**  
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As Germany is finding out right now, speaking the truth can be dangerous, even a century after the fact.

“The German Parliament overwhelmingly adopted a symbolic but fraught resolution on Thursday declaring the killings of Armenians by Ottoman Turks in 1915 a genocide, escalating tensions with Turkey at a diplomatically delicate juncture,” reported Alison Smale and Melissa Eddy

of The New York Times on Thursday. "The Turkish government angrily denounced the vote as 'null and void,' and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called his ambassador in Germany back to Ankara for consultations. ... Including Germany, 12 of the European Union's 28 members have recognized the Armenian killings as genocide. Despite initial protests, Turkey has maintained good relations with several of those countries."

Further complicating matters, some of the main German Members of Parliament behind measure are of Turkish descent.

"A German MP of Turkish origin, Cem Ozdemir, says he has received death threats over Germany's recognition," reported BBC News on Monday.

"Erdogan castigated ... the 11 MPs of Turkish origin, saying, 'What sort of Turks are they? Their blood must be tested in a lab,' he said. Ankara's mayor showed the 11 in a tweet saying they 'stabbed us in the back.' ... Turkish nationalists who rallied against the German MPs' vote made the sign of the Grey Wolves, a nationalist group that has murdered leftists and liberals in the past."

As I wrote in my May 15, 2016 column, "Calling genocide by its right name," when President Barack Obama was still a senator, he loudly acknowledged and acted in favor of Armenian genocide recognition. But, after he was sworn in, his promise to publicly accept this fact as president was swept away by the Turkish government's denials.

Whatever else is said, let it be known: the Armenian genocide happened. This is a fact and not up for debate. What's controversial is whether this is acknowledged or not. The Turkish government would like to keep the term "genocide" out of the discussion of the mass slaughter of Armenian people a century ago. What's amazing is that nearly everyone alive during the original events would have already died of natural causes anyway. It isn't as if the same exact officials of yore are still in positions of power. Yet, the present administration has an overriding political interest in denying the truth all this time later.

This is significant because when Adolf Hitler was planning his final solution for Poland's Jewish population in 1939, he reassured his top leaders by pointing out: "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?" The next tyrant will note our respect, or lack thereof, for the historical record on this point before they try their own holocaust. You can be sure of it. Modern Germans know a thing or two about coming to terms with past atrocities, and have apparently learned from history on this subject far better than others have.

The United States can sadly be counted among the list of nations who have so far side-stepped the issue. House Resolution 106, Affirmation of the United States Record on the Armenian Genocide Resolution, has been stalled out for nearly 10 years. Because of our delicate relationship with Turkey, an important ally in the region, we can't simply state what is plainly

obvious. We've allowed the truth to be sacrificed on the pyre of political expediency for far too long now. The longer we wait to come to acknowledge this, the harder it will be to ever do so.

Obama has until his last day in office to make good on his campaign promises. Tick-tock, Mr. President. Tick-tock.

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